

OVERCALLS

Note: The topics discussed below merely provide an introduction for beginners. With even only a little experience, you will realise that there are many refinements available in order to give a much more comprehensive approach.

1NT OVERCALL

After the opposition's opening bid, this shows 15 - 17 points and a good 'stop' in the opponent's bid suit (a 'stop' is a combination of cards that will ensure that you can take at least one trick in the suit).

The responses are identical to those following a 12 - 14 opening 1NT, but adjusted downwards by 3 points (since the overcall is 15 - 17). For example a raise to 3NT would be made on 10 - 15 points (for comparison, 13 - 18 points opposite an opening 1NT)

SIMPLE SUIT OVERCALL

A 'simple' overcall is an overcall in a suit at the lowest level. There are five main reasons to overcall:

- to bid constructively to find your best contract
- to push the opponents one or more levels higher
- to prepare the way for a possible sacrifice
- to indicate a good lead to partner
- to obstruct the opponents

At this stage we shall only directly consider the first reason, but most of the basic principles apply for all these considerations. To prepare for later development, overcalls at the *one* level should be in the 10 - 15 point range, and a good five card suit (or more). At the two level the range should be 12 - 15 points. (Over 15 points other bids are available – e.g. take-out doubles). Although vulnerability is important in considering whether or not to overcall, this will be ignored for the moment.

When responding to an overcall, partner should bid *roughly* the same as in response to an opening bid, except:

- you need a stopper in the opponents suit to bid no-trumps (2NT is natural, unlike opposite a major opening bid).
- you only need three card support (as is the case opposite a five-card major opening)
- if your partner has bid at the one level, you need two more points than you would opposite an opening bid (he may have overcalled on 10 points).

JUMP OVERCALLS

(Note: the following is a beginner's guide. With experience, players should soon aim to develop 'weak jump overcalls' – an entirely different concept).

A jump overcall is where one level of bidding space is omitted (e.g. 1♥ - 3♣, or 1♦ - 2♥)

These are made on a six card suit and 16 -18 points and are constructive but not forcing bids (i.e. your primary intention is to win the auction rather than disrupt the opposition).

In response:

- 0 – 6 points - pass, or if suitable raise pre-emptively to game (similar to 1♠ - 4♣)
7 – 8 points - if partner has bid at the two-level, this is an invitational bid requesting partner to bid game with a maximum. Either support partner (even on a good two-card suit), or bid no-trumps with a stop in the opponent's suit.
9+ points - raise to the appropriate game.

Exercises:

After your right hand opponent opens 1♦, what do you overcall with:

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| a) | ♠ KJ9
♥ KJ62
♦ AQ3
♣ Q42 | b) | ♠ AQJ76
♥ A4
♦ 543
♣ 976 | c) | ♠ AJ64
♥ A6
♦ QJ83
♣ K97 | d) | ♠ AKJ765
♥ 87
♦ AK
♣ Q52 | e) | ♠ AJ64
♥ A6
♦ QJ83
♣ Q97 |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|

- a) 1NT - 16 points and good stops in diamonds.
b) 1♠ - 11 points and a good suit.
c) 1NT - 15 points and a high probability of making a diamond trick given the opening bid.
d) 2♠ - a jump bid.
e) **PASS** - similar to (c) but only 14 points.

After 1♦ - 1NT (from partner) – pass – what do you bid with:

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| a) | ♠ 9862
♥ KJ62
♦ 32
♣ 542 | b) | ♠ 987652
♥ 84
♦ 543
♣ 32 | c) | ♠ K43
♥ KJ8
♦ 7654
♣ Q76 | d) | ♠ J43
♥ AJ6
♦ KJ6
♣ Q432 | e) | ♠ KJ73
♥ A964
♦ 97
♣ 743 |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|

- a) **PASS** - insufficient points for any action
b) 2♠ - a weak take-out in spades which partner will pass. Totally unsuitable for no-trumps.
c) 2NT - 9 points balanced. By comparison, you would have bid 2NT with a 12 count opposite an opening 1NT.
d) 3NT
e) 2♣ - Stayman, looking for a major fit. With an extra three points (say ♦K7) you would have bid 2♣ over a 1NT opening bid.

After 1♦ - 1♠ (from partner) – pass – what do you bid with:

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|
| f) | ♠ A62
♥ KJ62
♦ 32
♣ 9542 | g) | ♠ 987
♥ AKJ3
♦ 54
♣ K832 | h) | ♠ K43
♥ KQJ87
♦ A87
♣ 76 | i) | ♠ 98
♥ AJ87
♦ KJ6
♣ Q432 | j) | ♠ AJ732
♥ 6
♦ 93
♣ A743 |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|----------------------------------|

- f) Pass or 2♠. The advantage of the 2♠ bid is that it makes it more difficult for the opposition to re-enter the auction (2NT or at the three level)
g) 2♠ - if the 1♠ had been an opening bid, you would have bid 3♠. But he may only have a 10 count, so point-wise, down-rate the hand by two points – hence only bid 2♠.

- h) 3♠ - 13 points (equivalent to 11 points opposite an opening 1♠).
- i) 1NT - 11 points (equivalent to 9 points opposite an opening 1♠). Also 'stops' in the opponent's diamond suit.
- j) 4♠ - 9 points (equivalent to 7 points opposite an opening 1♠).

After 1♠ - 2♥ (from partner) – pass – what do you bid with:

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|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| k) | ♠ A6
♥ 864
♦ KJ32
♣ 9542 | l) | ♠ A987
♥ KJ3
♦ 54
♣ K832 | m) | ♠ K3
♥ AK7
♦ 7532
♣ K876 | n) | ♠ AQ4
♥ 87
♦ KJ76
♣ J432 | o) | ♠ KJ7
♥ J6
♦ AJ93
♣ KJ43 |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|

k) PASS

- l) 3♥ - you would have bid 3♥ over a 1♥ opening bid.
- m) 4♥
- n) 2NT - 11 points with stops in the opponent's spade suit
- o) 3NT - 13 points with stops in the opponent's spade suit

After 1♦ - 2♠ (i.e. a jump overcall from partner) – pass – what do you bid with:

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| p) | ♠ K6
♥ KJ62
♦ 32
♣ J9542 | q) | ♠ A9
♥ KQ73
♦ 543
♣ 9832 | r) | ♠ 3
♥ KQ103
♦ QJ109
♣ 10876 | s) | ♠ 4
♥ AJ87
♦ KJ6
♣ QJ432 | t) | ♠ 73
♥ A54
♦ 8763
♣ 9432 |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|

- p) 3♠ - partner will bid 4♠ if 17 or 18 points.
- q) 4♠
- r) 2NT - partner will bid 3NT with 17 or 18 points
- s) 3NT
- t) PASS**

After 1♥ - 3♦ (i.e. a jump overcall from partner) – pass – what do you bid with:

- | | | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| u) | ♠ 986
♥ KJ62
♦ A32
♣ Q42 | v) | ♠ AQ87
♥ 9873
♦ Q543
♣ 9 | w) | ♠ K72
♥ 3
♦ J74
♣ AK8753 |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|

- u) 3NT
- v) 4♦ - to raise a 3♣ or 3♦ jump overcall, you will often have an unbalanced hand with good support. To raise to the four level requires 7 – 9 points (remember you usually need about 27 points to make a game of 5♣ or 5♦)
- w) 5♦